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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

"Letters"

By

Rose M. Gonnella Butler

Date: May 14, 1982

APPROVALS

Advisor: Fred Meyer Fred Meyer
Date: 5/19/82
Associate Advisor: Suzanne Roth Suzanne Roth
Date: 5/25/82
Associate Advisor: Joseph Brown Joseph E. Brown
Date: May 21, 1982

Graduate Academic
Council
Representative:

Fred Meyer
Date: 9/2/82

Dean, College of
Fine & Applied Arts: Dr. Robert H. Johnston Ph. D.

Date: September 3, 1982

I, Rosemary Gonnella Butler, prefer to be contacted each
time a request for production is made. I can be reached at
the following address.

Date: 5.19.82

Early September

Neil,

I want you to know all that I feel and think as I embark on this second and final phase of graduate school.

I'm rather downcast. I haven't started painting; instead, I sit at my desk writing letters, reading and sharpening pencils. Last year was so lovely, so full of dreams. I was confident; I painted and thought what I had done was good. I look back now and see unrefined, cold, ghastly pieces, which only an instructor could tolerate.

I'm not complaining or "in despair" but I do feel like a child. I'm embarrassed. I have no sense of what is fine. Why am I so blind to my own mistakes and weaknesses? I sincerely fear the thought of never being able to tell whether I've produced good or bad art.

An artist, I suppose, must possess a certain balance of vanity and humility to keep producing and improving. Vanity is needed to go on painting even in the sight of countless failures and humility is necessary in order to accept criticism and thus grow. Too much of either destroys the art. I had too much vanity last year and now I'm suffering

from an overdose of humility. I've stopped painting; I'm too ashamed to continue.

Since I sit in my studio day after day, I must occupy some of the time with art-making. As an alternative to painting, I've begun to experiment with colored pencils on paper. I like it because paper is disposable. I can easily tear and destroy the piece if I'm not satisfied with the progress or the result. Canvasses on the other hand are not as readily disposed of. It takes more strength both physically (disassembling the canvas frame and tearing the painted material) and mentally to admit a full scale painting is a failure - lack of humility. So I think I'll switch to drawing for a while.

I picked up a little gem of a book the other day. It is a compilation of excerpts from the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson. In a group of statements on art and literature he writes, "Life is hard enough for poor mortals without having it indefinitely embittered for them by bad art".¹

I agree but how will I ever know if I'm adding to the world's bitterness or not? Suppose I'm happy turning out bad art? Is that a selfish attitude? Forgive me for not having anything better to say. September is too pleasant a month to be weighted down by sad thoughts.

October

Neil,

I haven't painted anything yet. I'm still working on the colored pencil drawings and waiting for your words of encouragement. There is one bright spot that has come to me from concentrating my efforts on the pencil drawings; I happened upon a technique that produces a very rich surface of color. I began by approaching the pencil drawings as I would an oil, with an underpainting of complimentary colors relative to the final colors. But this didn't work as I expected. Instead of producing a vibrating surface of color as it does in an oil painting, it produced a dull, muddy overall tone. Obviously, the complimentary pigments mixed and produced the muddy effect. Feeling silly for not anticipating this, I quickly tried something new. I abandoned the "relative compliment" method and worked instead with bright colors layered beneath dark shades of a related hue, i.e. vermillion under purple under violet. Surprisingly, this layering technique created a beautifully luminous surface. Now, I'm excited about trying the new technique with oils. My plans are to thin the paint considerably with oil/varnish and apply it as a glaze so each layer of color can be seen. I suppose I

have a reason to start painting again.

Yet, I have another small problem....inspiration. But don't cringe; I'll work out the solution myself. I've always thought inspiration was a mysterious thing. It arrives at the most unpredictable times, stays for an indeterminable period and then departs at the most inopportune moments. Last spring I was in its midst, now I am not. But, it isn't enough that I should be troubled with the fugitive nature of my inspiration; I continue to doubt my creative abilities and wonder if I've inadvertently misdirected my life. Perhaps I would have been better as a doctor.

In an attempt to relax and while waiting for some new inspiration to appear, I'm doing still life drawing to sharpen my draftsmanship, practice the layering technique and further develop my understanding of color. You might be wondering why my former inspiration (empty interiors) won't do for these practice sessions. I have several reasons. The first of these is the way the subject has been construed by my peers. They insist on attaching symbolic meanings to the imagery. During critiques and informal discussions, they ask if I'm concerned with portraying man's emptiness or loneliness. It's true, I did want a bit of melancholy to be present, but never

did I intend to have such depressing psychological connotations associated with the imagery. I'm tired of explaining that I'm not lonely, and tired of discussing symbols and themes that I never intentionally included. I did receive some sound advice which would free the subject matter from its severity. I was told to humanize the imagery by adding a pattern of flowers or a shadow of a plant or a cat. I tried but wasn't satisfied with the results. Finally, I realized that I was dissatisfied because I don't know what it is I want to portray. I am so caught up in the art whirl (art discussions, critiques, name dropping, elaborate art vocabulary etc. etc.) that I've forgotten about the art. I'm dropping out of the whirl and going back to classic basics. I'm using still life to relearn the properties of light, color and form. And, I'm re-examining why I paint interiors and what I want to portray and if I should continue utilizing the subject matter.

I must reiterate, I'm not "in despair". I'm just angry with myself for being caught in the art whirl and not working honestly.

I must tell you of another of my diversions from painting. I've become deeply involved with hand papermaking. Beating the materials into pulp, dyeing

it, making sheets and drying them has been deliciously time-consuming. After working only a day I can accumulate an abundant amount of results. Pulp can be made into single sheets of plain paper (although one could hardly call handmade paper plain) or used as one would use paint - mixing and blending to form images. To get representational images is a complex process which doesn't bring crisp results so I'm working abstractly. I've produced some single color field compositions and some collages. The whole process has been thoroughly refreshing. It certainly has been worth all the effort I put into it. Enclosed you'll find some of my results.

Between the worrying, drawing and papermaking, I've managed to squeeze in some novels by Henry Miller. His themes and characters are very good but why must his language be so flowery and pretentious? It is embarrassing. His story and constant sexual references are also embarrassing. Now you'll be calling me a prude and a Republican. Don't fear though, for I am neither.

Have you heard of one of the latest conservative causes, in which certain very right-winged groups are seeking bans on specific books from public libraries? It is frightening to think of what will happen if they

win. If a precedent is set, regulating libraries' collections will become chaotic and exasperating because no two groups will ever be satisfied with the same things. I think the groups seeking the bans have weak arguments. Basically they believe their tax dollars should not be spent on books which they deem immoral. I'm not touching on the subject of immorality but look at it simply. Historically, tax dollars have never been spent on programs etc. unanimously agreed upon by the public. My tax dollars are spent on many things I find immoral. Chemical weapon stockpiles is one. Each of us has complaints and objections to the way our tax monies are spent. Can you imagine the government trying to please each individual group in a population of the United States' size? It is laughably inconceivable. Yet, I must respect those groups who speak out. Strong opinions should be heard but I pray that the majority in this country vetoes any attempt to censor public libraries. Freedom of speech and education is being tampered with! Forgive me for sounding like a placard but I'm frightened by ultra-conservative groups. They seem to do more damage than good.

I do think we should take a long walk sometime and discuss the question of immorality.

- RMG

End October

Neil,

I'm not doing much these days, just watching the leaves turn colors. I did a bit of painting today and in between I thought of all the places I'd much rather be. The saving grace, though, is October. It is a splendid month. Between the cool air and the colors, it is very difficult to be sad these days.

This is the season for long walks, winter being too cold, summer too dank with heat and spring too brown and wet. I love strolling along the streets in the city. Everyone has picked up their pace now that vacations are over and the air is brisk but I like to stroll, inhaling every moment of October. In the evenings when I get home, I wander through the meadows around the house and feel as though I could disappear into the air as the sun sets.

—RG

Early November

N,

Thanks for recommending I read Virginia Woolf. I've fully enjoyed her novels Night and Day and Jacob's Room. You should read her short piece entitled, Conversation with Walter Sickert. It has some pleasant thoughts about life in the fine arts. You were right, she writes colorfully and descriptively but her language is much more eloquently controlled than Henry Miller's. She writes vividly and it is refined, not embarrassingly pretentious. Her story in Night and Day is more than just a narrative. It is a poem of the confusions of love. While reading her work I was reminded of an important quality I'm missing in my own — poetics.

Painting, like poetry, must in a limited frame, give the viewer a concentrated dose of life. Cézanne, Matisse, Bonnard, Vuillard and Chagall are a few of those great painters I have always admired for the poetic way in which they portray the simple aspects of living. As I begin to paint again, I'm excited about putting into practice the lessons of poetry.

I've come to the realization that I'm just beginning and I must give myself a chance to keep learning. I've criticized my abilities to the point of near destruction.

I had to realize that my results were unrefined but not pointless. I must continue to paint; seeing my mistakes will show me where to improve.

I've resolved to give myself years just to learn to master physical techniques of the paint and the formal qualities of painting. But practice of technique alone is not enough. I must, too, be thinking about the content of my painting. Not developing imagery and content along with techniques is like having a body in which the legs grew first for ten years and then had to wait for the rest of the body to catch up. To function, it is necessary to grow as a whole.

Luckily the layering technique I had mentioned in a previous letter, is working out beautifully in oils. The glazing of light to dark colors does create a luminously rich surface. Deborah told me the color was so lush and scrumptious, she wanted to eat it. Now, I intend to make color the major emphasis in my work. I'll use romantic color to portray a concentrated dose of my memories of day light and night light. I wish to relay a sense of light which denotes a temporality and a tranquillity that comes at certain times of the morning and evening. I want to describe that notion of time-light through atmospheric color.

Whether my subject matter is still life or interiors doesn't matter. I am inspired by both. As for the themes, morals or meanings of my work, I've learned from Hemingway to leave the messages to Western Union.

I must clarify a statement I made to you in one of my last letters. Obviously you misunderstood when I said papermaking was refreshing (that it is) but because I was doing abstract work with the results, doesn't mean I find abstraction more enjoyable than realism. Somewhere I read that man's chief end is to enrich the world and have a fairly good time while doing so; I'm working hard to accomplish the former, the latter I do because I paint representationally.

I am very satisfied viewing abstract works and I think one can learn a great deal about color, space and composition from the masters of abstract art, such as, Rothko, Motherwell, Diebenkorn. Yet, I'm happiest painting realistically. I love the specificity of emotion created by a direct allusion to a recognizable object. I enjoy the narrative qualities I have the opportunity to accentuate and probably, there is a little vanity involved; I know I can draw.

If I seem a bit more self-confident these days, you are right. Just the fact that I've written

to you has helped me better understand my own thoughts, work out the solutions to my problems and thus regain a little self esteem. A painter should be humble but not to the point of destructive self-effacement.

Keep sending your words,

Rose

Early December

N,

I have so much to talk about but as usual I must first come to my defense. Why must you always play the role of devil's advocate and force me to understand the things I've written you?

I agree with what you said, I can not have my paintings be only tranquil and expect them to be good, a painting must contain a bit of life's evil too. Generally though, a painting can lean toward offering relief from life's struggles. Matisse once said, "What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter, an art which could be for every mental worker, for the business man as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue."² The key in the statement is balance. A painting can free the viewer from mental fatigue but it shouldn't remove him completely from the struggle of reality.

But balance is a most difficult thing to achieve. It is quite easy for an artist to be either too sweet or too extremely depressing. Many painters fall to either side and stay there comfortably but their art

will never enrich the world, rather it will embitter it as Stevenson has said.

As for my efforts, I know my work is tranquil almost to the point of pain but I'm working on a balance of tranquillity, discreet melancholy and playfulness. The quiet environments I create are balanced by elements of mischief, such as, objects colored, placed or included in unexpected ways and compositions cropped unexpectedly. The serenity is balanced by a feeling of transience (not only because the rooms look partially lived in but also the quality of the light appears to be temporary). The transience is in turn balanced by the tranquil feeling of the whole. Still, I have not achieved a successful combination of elements. I fear the starkness of the imagery verges on the morose. I'm not dismayed by my efforts, though, the problem of balance is so interesting that I almost don't want to master the solutions.

You're also demanding an explanation of my term "romantic color". It is simple to understand. I formed the term in my mind when my thoughts were absorbed with the ideas of the relationship between poetry and painting. A poem engages emotions and imagination by carefully, colorfully structuring phrases with all the allusive and illusive power of words and their

sounds and rhythms. Painted color can do the same if treated just as allusively and illusively. To create a poem, color must be used not practically but imaginatively. The color should be based on feeling, not fact. "Romantic" means something based on emotion rather than fact. Chagall said it clearly, "It is neither the so-called real color, nor the conventional color that truly colors the object. It is a conception that lies outside the subject and the eye".³ Simply, imaginary color is romantic color.

Obviously, too, "romantic" alludes to a love affair and as trite as it may sound, I do paint because of a love for color and its power to move people.

You might be wondering where I found precedent for the use of romantic color. All students learn of it quickly from studying the Impressionists, Fauves, etc. onward, but it was the work of Pierre Bonnard that has given me the most incentive to use color as abstractly as I do. Impressionists painted violet shadows and mauve horizons because they truly saw them as violet and mauve. Bonnard on the other hand, painted a lilac-hued face, a violet tree or a red table by virtue of the picture logic and poetic intention. This plastic use of color is what perfumes his work romantically. He is wonderful at it because he fills

his canvasses sweetly and stops just short of the ridiculous. Because his work is such a blatant, joyous celebration of color I wanted to participate in the celebration too.

Where his color is joyous, though, I'm afraid mine is not. My colors have been dark lately. I'm aware of the solemnity of dark hues but I'm not ready to lighten my palette yet. The dark colors of my canvasses are partially due to the fact that the layering technique I've been using is more successful with the darker hues. Secondly, I like the mystery which darker colors easily create. I am working on balancing the somber colors, which take up great expanses of the composition, with a focal point of light. In each composition I add a "hot spot" or an area which is very luminous in comparison to the dark area which encompasses it. I'm also taking the opportunity to use the light area as a compliment to the whole. For example, a purple expanse of darkness is contrasted in one area by a yellow glowing object. Does that sound contrived? It is. I know I can get a bit too clever at times and hurt the painting so you needn't play the devil's advocate and remind me of it. I will on my own avoid contrived color relationships

and compositions (difficult as it may be).
Nonetheless, I need your advice because it is
hard for me to see all of my mistakes.

Rose

Late December

Dear Neil,

Before you ask, I wanted to let you know my Christmas holiday was very pleasant. Besides eating, I mainly ate. I wish I hadn't been with the family at Thanksgiving. I used all the news, events, and weather reports as conversation then so I had basically nothing to say at Christmas. That is probably the reason I engaged in a non-stop consumption of food.

I have a piece of advice for you to keep in mind for next year. It concerns Christmas presents. Each year I always get beautiful new clothes, essential art supplies, the occasional joke gift and a slew of wrong books. I say wrong because they are never the books I'd like to have in my permanent collection. They are always good books but I'd rather borrow them from the library. It's a shame I never get the complete works of Guy de Maupassant or Flaubert in hardcover. This year I received the complete P.G. Wodehouse and John Irving's novels in hardcover. I thoroughly enjoy Wodehouse. His works are amusing escapes, but where did my family get the idea I wanted his complete works? Do you know how many he wrote? Don't ask. As for John Irving, I'm sorry I read The World According to Garp. Actually it was only one section I regret

having read. It was a graphic description of a rape which still haunts me. For that reason, I am afraid to read The 1581b. Marriage and The Hotel New Hampshire. I must admit though, it was my own words that lead to this years gift books. Now, I've learned to choose my words carefully near the holiday because what may seem like a casual comment, such as,

Mother: What is that book I saw in your suitcase?

Rose: It was a short novel by P.G. Wodehouse. It was quite pleasant, would you like to read it?

Mother: No, no I was just wondering....

may lead to a stockpile. Other conversations to be wary of,

Brother: Have you read The World According to Garp?

Rose: Yes, it was frightening.

Brother: I suppose you hate his work now.

Rose: Not at all. I've only read one novel.

I'd like to read his other works before I make any harsh judgements.

Brother: Which other novels were you considering....

Take my advice, when you're home before the holidays talk about Flaubert, Hugo, Hemingway, Updike and mention the fact that softcovers never last.

After the din of the holidays settled, I was able

to get into the city for a few days. I spent the first day buying non-beautiful clothing to wear in the studio and searching the bookstores for some real treasures. The other two days, I did the usual, sucked in a lethal dose of art at the galleries and thoroughly enjoyed myself at the museums.

Fortunately, the Met was not crowded. It was a pleasure to wander through the displays. The American wing was full of surprises. Georgia O'Keeffe's work never ceases to amaze me. She has the most sensitive hand for applying paint and a wonderful eye for capturing the most interesting forms in spectacular compositions. The work of her contemporaries also impresses me. Demuth's work, especially his watercolors, have done the impossible. He has taken a naturally beautiful subject (flowers) and added to it the most charming new dimensions. There is also a large double portrait of a young couple in the collection by John Singer Sargent. Reproductions will never give an idea of his command of light, tone, form and how he achieves it with single bravura strokes of color. Another unexpected pleasure was the Tiffany glass. The color and the flowing shapes of his lamps and vases is wonderful. It is no wonder that generations have imitated his flamboyant style.

I also wandered through the European painting

collection. Degas has a room devoted solely to him. I'm still in awe of his draftsmanship. Also, I'll never tire of Van Gogh's irises, Gauguin's Tahitian paintings or Pissaro's streets. It is such an exhilarating experience to actually view those works which have long been studied only through books.

I did get a chance to visit The Museum of Modern Art, but because of the incredible amount of people, it was impossible to peacefully walk and observe without hearing a gamut of comments and opinions spattered out. I did manage to get to see Matisse's dramatic "Red Studio" and some of Bonnard's work. I wanted to linger over them and others but how much work can possibly be viewed in one day?

Actually, I went to MOMA in the first place to look at Edward Hopper's paintings. I saw a retrospective of his work last December but I wanted to review the paintings. The reason is that I am always told how similar my work is to his. I suppose it is so because he paints silent interiors and other restrained scenes. He is also concerned with light and time of day. Yet try as I might to see the strength of his work, it does not move me. In fact, aside from the use of interiors, I do not think I can draw very much from his pictures. Frankly, I don't find his paintings inspirational or his results

an influence on my own work.

I can't help thinking of Vincent Scully's comment in the essay you sent, that artists strongly deny their influences (as I am now?). If one looks closely at Hopper's work, his major concern is a statement of man's social condition. The light he uses enhances these statements, i.e., lonely dark streets eerily lit, empty, dark theatres incandescently illuminated, and a quiet street in the early morning sun. The light itself is not the main subject; it is created as a stage for the human drama. I'm not making any negative criticisms, I just don't want to have his social commentaries likened to my work.

Isn't it a coincidence, Hopper's retrospective was shown the same year the conservatives gained a majority in the government. Perhaps it was a result of the swing to the right and not a coincidence. Conservatism is fine if it means a balanced budget and an easing of inflation (personally, it has influenced the art world toward a greater re-acceptance of traditional realism which means I actually have a chance to be an artist in years to come) but as far as right-winged social policies are concerned, I have many contrary ideas. I won't tell you of them because politics make wonderful after-dinner arguments but not letters.

I'd like to argue about the contemporary works I

saw in the galleries in New York. After seeing what has been shown, I don't have to worry any longer about bad painting. I was so exasperated by some of the ugliness, it became almost funny. The motto in Soho seems to be, do anything wild, outrageous, huge and downright bad; just be sure it's new. The pressure today comes not from the so-called plurality of styles but from the growing pressure to produce something completely and sensationally different.

What a crazy time to live through — the conservatives are in power, traditional realism is exhibited frequently and at the same time all hell has broken loose in a search to find a history-breaking style. Extremism may not be all bad after all; it certainly adds a wild spice to living.

Extremely moderate,
Rose

January

Dear Neil,

It is half past January and the topic of casual conversation always begins with how cold and grey and cold it is outdoors. I write in secret to you because I know you are sympathetic. I don't hate the cold weather, I enjoy it, but you mustn't mention to anyone what I've written. One must, to get along with others here, follow suit and complain, complain each time the weather is mentioned.

The snow is what makes six layers of clothing worth the discomfort and inconvenience. It (the snow) is magnificent in the open fields and when it drifts over hills changing the landscape. Don't you find a changing landscape more exciting than one which is a dank and unmoving green? Admittedly, I like warm weather and greenery too, but warmth can only be appreciated in the winter. Have you ever realized that a hot chocolate or a smooth, hot cream soup only tastes special after coming in from the cold? The people in the South couldn't possibly appreciate those pleasures. If winter only makes me appreciate hot soup and creamy hot chocolate, its bitterness is justified. But there are more pleasures, hundreds more. Among my favorites are a brisk winter walk followed by

a long session on the sofa with pillows, hot tea, a quilt and a book. It is infinitely more relaxing than the sun, sand, sea and a paperback.

My latest reading has included F. Scott Fitzgerald's, The Beautiful and Damned. Since there is no sense in reading a good book unless we can discuss it, I'll expect a long, warm conversation on the subject to follow in your next message. This lovely quotation should inspire you to read it. "A woman should be able to kiss a man beautifully and romantically without any desire to be either his wife or mistress." ⁴

Yours,
Rose

Mid-February

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your generous offer to take me to Paris to look at art and have a long talk about Scott Fitzgerald's work. I certainly would love to go, if you could make it Paris at the turn of the century. I should very much like to meet Bonnard, Vuillard and Matisse at the beginning of their careers. I should love to know them before they grew wise. I'd like to be a part of their questions. I'd like especially to congratulate Vuillard and Bonnard for not succumbing to the destruction of form. Neither of them followed the emerging cubist theories. For me, they stand out from the period not as great masters but as good painters. They were creators of a view which was all color, all poetry and light, a view which has moved me to a manifestation of my own feelings in paint.

Matisse is the great teacher, the master who has brought simplicity beyond the point of its being just an element of visual language and established it as a creative philosophy.

Though many other artists have influenced my painting, I could never mention all of them. I do think you already know that I study Georges de La Tour for his mysterious atmospheres of darkness and Chagall

for his naivete, romantic subjects and color. Did you know I borrowed my straightforward compositions (parallel to the picture plane) from Vermeer? I could go on but it's not important because what affects my work today will surely alter in the future. As I grow, my likes and dislikes change; my mind catches new thoughts, my eye sees weaknesses and strengths otherwise unnoticed.

Of my work, as of late, I had a success in terms of color and atmosphere. It is a large composition of an interior. The light portrayed is a transient blue. As I was reading John Updike's The Maple Stories, I came across a passage that puts into literature some of the things I would like my work to possess.

...."The old house, the house we left a mile away, seems relieved of our furniture. The rooms where we staged our meals and ceremonies and self-dramatizations and where some of us went from infancy to adolescence, rooms and stairways so imbued with our daily motions that their irregularities were bred into our bones and could be traversed in the dark, do not seem to mourn, as I thought they would. The house exalts in its sudden size, in the reach of its empty corners. Floorboards long muffled by carpets shine as if freshly varnished. Sun pours unobstructed through curtainless windows. The

house is young again. It, too, had a self; a life, which for a time was eclipsed by our lives; now, before it's new owners come to burden it, it is free. Now only moonlight makes the floor creak....Nature is tougher than ecologists admit. Our house forgot us in a day. I feel guilty that we occupied it so thinly, that trio of movers and a day's breezes could so completely clean us out." ⁵

I must also thank you for sending me some of your lithographs. You too have been successful, they truly captured all the ethereal qualities you've described in your letters. I wish I could answer the questions you have concerning which elements make a great painting. I could form a list of adjectives describing a great work of art that is a mile long or I could say that there are those who philosophize a lifetime on what is beauty and what is art and never conclude anything. The only conclusion is, as you know, no conclusion, only thought.

As for doubting your right to depict landscape, a subject which has ancient origins, an artist must work honestly from his own experience, knowledge and training. If you were to have a conversation with Marc Chagall he would tell you to continue working and offer the world something of yourself. He would say, I have

seen many great paintings of the past and present but I think "perhaps another eye, another view exists, an eye of another kind and otherwise placed not there where one is accustomed to find it. For example, the trees painted by Monet are good for Monet. Perhaps they are waiting, these trees, to be shown once again. It seems to me other dimensions exist. Perhaps I could infuse the picture and the eye of the spectator with new and unaccustomed elements."⁶

We all have a chance to offer the world our view; if we are successful we will know it in our hearts. You should not feel as though the physical landscape is all that man needs. There is nature and there is art. There is a need for both; each is unique.

I will tell you also that I don't know how much of nature to depict but you must choose the elements you use carefully, add a bit of mystery and never deny the viewer the belief that it is he who is creating. Keep me in your thoughts.

Yours,
Rose

March

Dear Neil,

I'm glad to hear of the successes you've had in the past weeks. I've been working as hard (never too hard) with good results too. I've received many complimentary comments on my work as well as constructive criticism.

As I work and produce, the questions I pose to myself keep flowing. Yet, I don't feel the need to linger over them, discuss each one, and worry about the solutions. Work seems to be the solution to everything, working and waiting and growing one step at a time.

Contrary to my expectations, success has only meant harder work and more questions. I thought as one grew painting would become easier but it isn't so, it gets more difficult. I suppose I'll have to expect the same as the years go by.

I admit, my imagery is still a bit painfully sullen but I intend to lighten my palette and my attitudes and keep in mind that life is playful and mischievous as well as tranquil. With the approach of April and May and the completion of school, my thoughts are both excited and unsettled. I've been daydreaming of my future, not only of painting but of the newness of the people and places to come.

Send me a surprise,
Rose

Late April

Dear N,

I am all anticipation not only for the thesis but also with thoughts of the immediate future; our escape to New England or Nova Scotia (maybe we'll never make it past Vermont) takes precedence in my mind. As for the distant future, it will be at hand so quickly. I don't want to spend any time pondering it now.

The thesis exhibit is exciting but not as momentous as it loomed in September. Seeing my work on display was like looking in a mirror. All the flaws popped into view first. The redeeming qualities only revealed themselves after a closer second look. I'm not ashamed of the work, but I know I've just begun. I'll probably be changing my ideas on my very next canvas but never mind my ideas: at this point, they are always changing.

I can say this: I arrived in Rochester totally without ballast and I leave with more than I ever dreamt. It will take another couple of years just to sort out the past two.

Forgive me for the brevity of my last messages. I wanted to write more but I feel it is best to wait for you to come, see the finished pieces and discuss all

we've done. A two-way conversation, an immediate give and take, a question, a response and a long and luxurious unwritten conversation are something I desire greatly. I want to stop with a beautiful message which was slipped into my heart the other day by a close friend. It is from The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting. We will talk of it when our hours together are closer.

"Among those who study painting, some strive for an elaborate effect and others prefer the simple. Neither complexity in itself nor simplicity is enough.

Some aim to be deft, others to be laboriously careful. Neither dexterity nor conscientiousness is enough.

Some set great value on method while others pride themselves on dispensing with method. To be without method is deplorable but to depend entirely on method is worse.

You must learn first to observe the rules faithfully; afterwards, modify them according to your intelligence and capacity. The end of all method is to seem to have no method."⁷

Sincerely,
Rose

APPENDIX PAINTINGS:

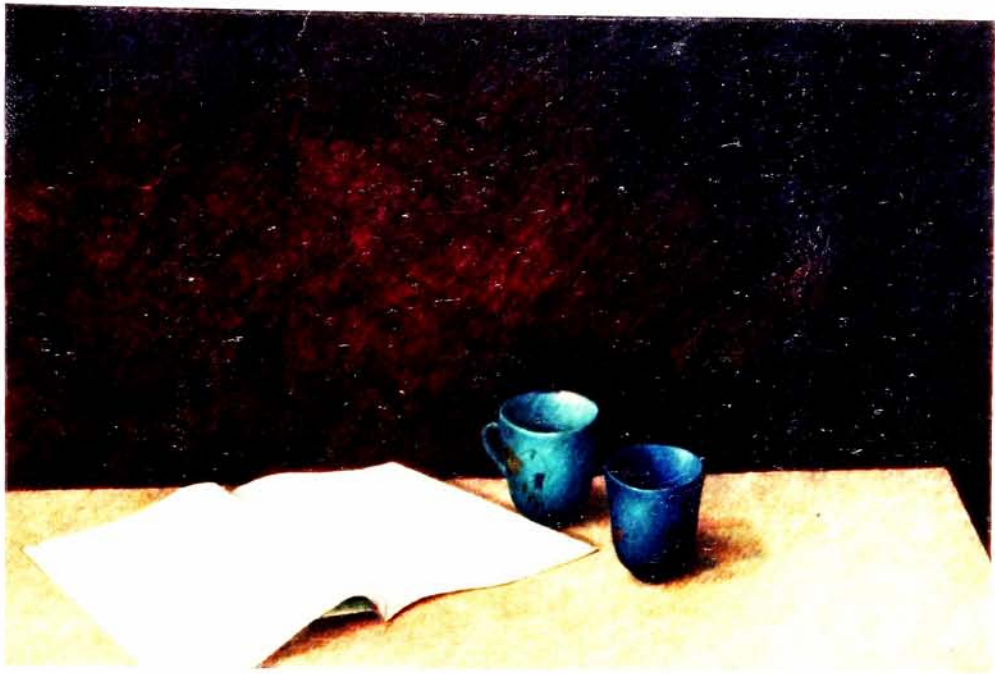
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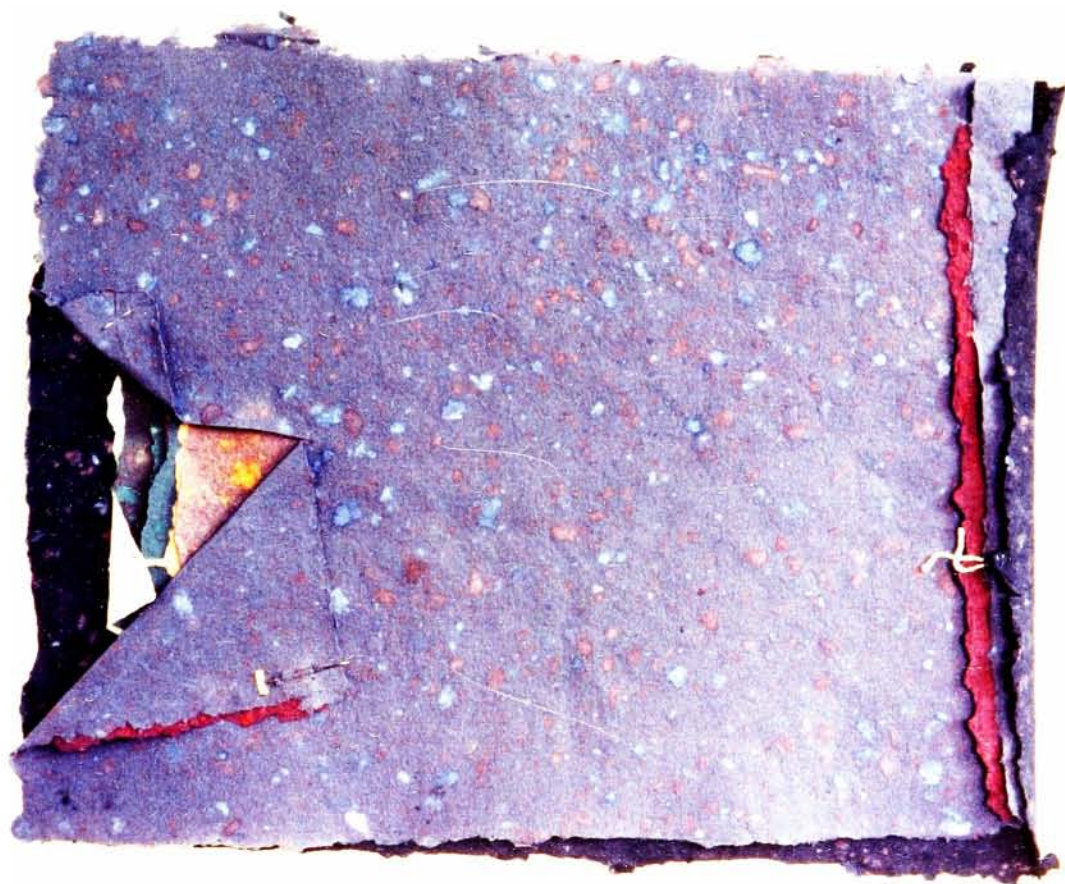














FOOTNOTES

¹Robert Louis Stevenson, The Pocket R.L.S.: Being Favorite Passages from the Works of Stevenson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 175.

²Flam, Jack D., Matisse on Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), p.38.

³Chagall, Marc, Chagall by Chagall, trans. John Shepley, Charles Sorlier, ed. (New York: Harry Abrams, 1979), p.8.

⁴Fitzgerald, F. Scott, The Beautiful and Damned (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p.113.

⁵Updike, John, Too Far to Go (New York: Fawcett Crest Books of CBS, 1979), pp. 146-147.

⁶Chagall, Chagall by Chagall, p.9.

⁷Lu Ch'AI, The Mustard Seed, A Garden Manual of Painting, trans. and ed., Mai-mi Sze (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1956), p. 17.

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